Issues and Concerns in Children's Values Education

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Values education is often controversial reflecting contradictory but deeply held beliefs by different sections of society as to what are core human values. There has also been a shift in how values education is taught in schools over the last 30 years. These changes are discussed along with recent intervention programs and the problems associated with the measurement of children's multidimensional values profiles. The paper outlines the design of the Children's Values Profile, a multidimensional instrument to assess children's self-perceptions of their values. It is argued that such an instrument would assist educators to systematically and objectively evaluate the effectiveness of values based intervention programs and identify the characteristics of students with high and low values scores, and the impact such scores had on students' educational outcomes and behaviour.

Children's values

Children's values formation has been a goal of education for a considerable period of time (Kurtines, 1984), but there has been considerable controversy about which values to be taught, how it is taught, and how it can be evaluated (Lutkehaus & Greenfield, 2004). For example, in recent times there has been a lamenting that core values have been lost from the Australian community (Mackay, 1997, 1999; McGuire, 1997; Mullins, 1999; Pascoe, 1996). Further, in a response to the escalating school violence in American schools, President Clinton proposed a "values-based violence prevention initiative" (Wagener, 2000, p. 8). Closer to home, Judge Fred McGuire, President of the Children's Court of Queensland, expressed concern that, "There is now, I believe, a widely accepted view that we as a nation have abandoned many of our traditional values, and are living off our moral capital" (McGuire, 1997, p. 4). In recent times the Australian Government through the Department of Education, Science and Training, have released a draft 'National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools' (2004), even though, it is far from resolved what should constitute such education intervention, or how such programs are to be assessed.

Despite calls from Australian politicians, judges and others in the community for the revisiting, strengthening, even reintroduction of a values base education in primary and secondary school settings little has been documented, particularly in primary schools regarding the effectiveness of these programs (Kirschenbaum, 2000). There is literature concerning values education in Australian schools (Browning, 1994; Cawsey, 2002;

Hill, 1994; Lovat & Schofield 1998, Lovat, Schofield, Morrison, & O'Neill, 2002) with some of this documentation couched in a particular religious persuasion (Forgasz, 2002; Newell & Rimes, 2002; Salman, 2002; Tarlinton & O'Shea, 2002). Almost overwhelmingly the literature calls for the need to maintain, or to reintroduce, the teaching of values in Australian schools. However, with only one or two exceptions, the literature is silent on the measurement of such programs. To help clarify this situation the present paper aims to discuss what is values education and how it has changed over the years as well as provide an outline of a primary school values measurement instrument.

Primary school setting

Education is a value-laden activity, indeed Tarlinton and O'Shea (2002) stated:

> Values are core to a school; they come with the architecture and the furniture and decorations of the building itself. They are personified in the attributes of the teachers and in the standards of behaviour expected of the students; they are made explicit in the rubrics and rituals, particularly in those that accompany tragedy or celebrate success (p. 90).

An examination of the values discourse suggests that there are a number of different kinds of value, such as moral, educational, aesthetic, social, political, and religious. A considerable literature exists which describes values and values education in the primary school setting. There is, however, a degree of confusion, and even conflict over terminology. On one hand, Salman (2002) identified common or core educational values and special spiritual and moral values, while on the other hand, Aspin asserted "that there are no such separate 'things' as values: values are not independent entities, somehow existing as things or ends in themselves" (Aspin, 2002, p. 15). For Aspin, values are embedded and embodied in everything individuals did. Other writers disagree with Aspin and assert that values can be named and are discernable, even measurable (Bulauch, 1999).

Confusion concerning how values are named and constructed continues and as a result the terms values, ethics, and morals are often used interchangeably. Irwin (1988) has tried to clarify the terms by noting,

> what is prized or held in high esteem (values) implies standards of appropriate human behavior (morals) compatible with principles (ethics) governing what is good for the person and for the society to which the individual belongs (Irwin, 1988, p. 6).

Although Irwin attempts to discretely separate and define the terms, ethics, morals, and values, in practice they inform each other in unquantifiable and often inseparable ways. The term 'values education' is closely related to other terms in the literature including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (Meakin, 1988), character education (Lickona, 1991), education in virtues (Carr & Steutel, 1999) and the development of attitudes and personal qualities (Halstead & Taylor, 2000). Kirschenbaum (2000) distinguished between values education as a field and the programs, such as values clarification, as elements within that field.

Historical review

A brief historical overview demonstrates Kirschenbaum's argument. Explicit character education prevailed at the turn of the twentieth century with progressive citizenship education holding sway in the twenties and thirties. Post war education placed less of a

focus on directly teaching values in isolation although set reading text books and social studies text books still contained strong value messages to students about working hard and getting ahead. In the sixties and seventies values clarification, values analysis and Kohlberg's (1984) moral development model started to become more predominant. A more directive form of moral education took place in the eighties, while character education became prevalent through the nineties and into the new millennium (Kirschenbaum, 2000).

In Western countries the shift in values education was most obvious with the introduction of Jerome Bruner's work with the program, *Man A Course of Study* (MACOS, Bruner, 1966; Lutkehaus & Greenfield, 2004). Here the focus was now on cultural values with the central question being: What is human about being human? The program focused on five domains: Tool making, language, social organisation, prolonged childhood, and the urge to explain one's world. Values education had started to make a significant shift from a Western historical perspective looking at leadership and great men, to a multi-cultural, anthropological perspective (Lutkehaus & Greenfield, 2004). Burner also shifted values education from an instructional focus on rules of correct moral behaviours to more of a reflective thinking focus, encouraging students to have a social-consciousness about their world and its problems. In part, this shift reflects a wider shift within education from a behavioural group norm and external reward focus to more of a cognitive individual and intrinsic reward focus (Pressley & Roehrig, 2004). The debate about the MACOS program lasted for some years with Lutkehaus and Greenfield (2004) making the claim that values education is often controversial reflecting contradictory but deeply held beliefs by different sections of society as to what are core human values. As a result of concerns and controversy, in the thirty years prior to 1990 values education, particularly as developed in American universities and institutions involved values clarification; values analysis; Kohlberg's (1984) of moral development concept; and character education (Bulach, 1999; Irwin, 1988).

Implementation

Children begin to learn social values very early on in life, probably developing a social moral sense of what is right and wrong within that culture within the first two years of life (Buzzelli, 1992; Kuebli, 1994). These values and moral sensibilities are closely linked with the emotional and social development of the child's early social and home environments. According to Halstead and Taylor (2000) the role of the school is to build on and supplement the values that young children have already begun to develop. The school has a socialization role by offering and exposing the pupil to a range of values accepted within a society and culture. This assumes, therefore that the school and the home share similar values. The difficult question then arises, which values should be presented to the children and in what manner?

Looking at the question of how values are to be taught, Irwin (1988) agued that traditional (American) nationalistic and Judeo-Christian values could be taught either directly or indirectly. Although the direct teaching of a 'common core' of moral imperatives may lead to indoctrination, while at the other end of the spectrum teaching values indirectly may lead to a disconnection between society values and the values the

individual generates through personal experience. In terms of what to teach and how it can be measured three studies will be reviewed Bulach and Butlek (2002), Lovat and Schofield (1998), and Hawkes (in Farrer, 2000).

Bulach and Butlek (2002) examined an entire school (American) district, across grade levels and using direct input from the school communities involved gathered a list of character values that had been identified as relevant for the school community. Consensus was then gained from ministers (clergy), teachers, and parents. The agreed list of 28 character values were grouped into 16 sets of character traits. An instrument to measure the extent to which these character values were present in each school (baseline data) was developed. The instrument incorporated 100 behaviour items reflecting the 16 character traits. Significantly, students were required to report only on what they thought other students did or thought.

Lovat and Schofield (1998) evaluated the New South Wales values intervention program The Values We Teach (1991). In this program the values were grouped under three categories; i) those relating to education, ii) self/others, and iii) civic responsibilities. Under these categories were listed up to 14 specific behavioural goals such as 'accepting own worth as an individual'. These goal statements formed the basis for the construction of a bank of 33 items assessment instrument. The authors concluded:

A curriculum intervention in the area of morals and values can produce a significant change in measured attitudes.

Intervention success seemed to be dependent on the immediate relevance to the school-related environment of the child.

Pronounced gender differences were noted.

Hawkes (Farrer, 2000; Hawkes & Heppenstall, 2001) developed a values program and trailed it in West Kidlington, UK. The program involves the purposeful introduction of twenty-two value concept words; humility, courage, unity, peace, freedom, love, hope, cooperation, honesty, responsibility, appreciation, patience, tolerance, friendship, quality, happiness, caring, simplicity, trust, understanding, thoughtfulness, respect. A new concept word is selected each month and introduced to all of the students, through classroom discussions, literature sources (fiction and non-fiction), music and drama. In addition the concept word is reinforced and practiced on a daily basis in classroom and playground settings (Hawkes & Heppenstall, 2001). Unfortunately to date, no thorough evaluation has been made of this promising program, in part because the issue of assessment of such programs is not yet clarified.

Need for valid instruments to assess values

Until valid assessment instruments are developed in the domain of values education it is very difficult to systematically and objectively evaluate values based programs and compare the effectiveness of different interventions on children's values formation. Such an assessment instrument would assist in investigating some fundamental education questions as: What are the characteristics of students with low values scores compared to students with high value scores? Are there cultural background, socio-economic status,

gender, and developmental differences in the domain of children's values formation? Do value education programs change students' values perceptions? How do children's self-concept, self-efficacy, and academic achievement scores correlate with children's self-ratings of their values?

Designing an assessment instrument

Because values are considered phenomenological (Parjares, 2004), inferred rather than seen, the main methods of identification and assessment have relied on observation data or self-report surveys. Both of these methods have their advantages and disadvantages but increasing researchers are focusing more on self-report measures because of the issue of standardisation of concepts and responses, the reliability of the data and the ability to validate the instrument using external procedures (Hay & Ashman, 2003; Marsh, Craven, & McInerney, 2003).

Based, in part, on the research of Bulach and Butlek (2002), Lovat and Schofield (1998), and Hawkes (Farrer, 2000) the aim has been to develop an instrument to better evaluate children's multidimensional vales called Children's Values Profile (Fyffe, Hay, & Palmer, in progress). The seven multidimensions and their sub-domains, drawn from the literature, inform the design of the Children's Values Profile and are listed in Table 1 with an example of items shown in Table 2.

Table 1

Domains and sub-domains in the Children's Values Profile

DOMAIN	SUB-DOMAIN
Behaviour	Bullying; Playing by the rules; Self-regulation
Academic progress	Academic self-efficacy; Expressive activities; Health values
Self concept	Physical ability; Physical appearance; Peer relations; Literacy; Mathematics; School; Esteem; Parent relations
Social	Tolerance; Communication; Asking for help
Emotional intelligence	Self-awareness; Self-management; Motivation; Self-expression; Social competence
World view	Intolerance/racism; Justice
School climate	Peace; Co-operation; Responsibility; Civics; Safety; Caring; Feeling valued

Table 2

Example of items in the Children's Values Profile

DOMAIN	SUB-DOMAIN	ITEM
Social	*Tolerance*	I play with children who are different to me
		I like children who are different to me
		Speaking a different language is good
	Communication	I encourage other class members to do well at school
		Others understand what I say
		I handle problems when they happen
	Asking for help	If I have a problem I talk to my friends
		If I have a problem I talk to a teacher
		If I have a problem I talk to my parents

The Children's Values Profile is currently undergoing measures to establish validity, reliability and to set norms.

Conclusion

Conceptually the area of values education and in particular values education for primary school students, is a complex but emerging domain for researchers and practitioners. While values formation remains a goal of education its definition and implementation continues to generate debate and it is often clouded by a confusion of terms and how it can be positively enhanced and measured. Researchers in the field now perceive the concept to be multifaceted and multidimensional. The development of the Children's Values Profile attempts to capture the developmental and multidimensionality character of the construct for children. It moves the debate forward and identifies core components associated with the construct children's values, based on contemporary theoretical models. The educational implications of the development of such a measure are that the domain can begin to systematically and objectively evaluate the effectiveness of values based programs, identify the characteristics of students with high and low values scores, and the impact such scores have on students' educational outcomes and behaviour.

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